



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING



JEREMY M. HUGHES, PH.D.
INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT
OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

May 2, 2005

MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Education

FROM: Mrs. Heidi Capraro, 2004-2005 Michigan Teacher of the Year

SUBJECT: Report on Teacher of the Year Activities for April 2005

April Activities

- Battle Creek Area Math & Science Center
- Delta Kappa Gamma Banquet
- Education Policy Fellowship Program (EPFP) Washington D.C. Policy Seminar
- National Science Teachers Association Conference
- National Teacher of the Year Recognition Program, Washington D.C.
- St. Philip High School Science Teacher Meeting, Kalamazoo
- State Board of Education Meeting

Reflections

I felt extremely privileged to have been in the company of so many extraordinary people this past month. Of the many touching experiences I've witnessed this year, none could compare to that of the announcement I was able to be a part of at the White House. After meeting President and Mrs. Bush in the Oval Office, the state teachers of the year gathered in the Rose Garden for a celebration. Both the First Lady and President Bush gave uplifting speeches and then congratulated the National Teacher of the Year, Jason Kamras. Jason's speech left all of us in awe as to what his high poverty math students had accomplished through his care and dedication. Jason's message was clear, high expectations for all children with no exceptions. There was hardly a dry eye in the audience when President Bush called Mr. Kamras' students to the platform. The teachers heard Jason speak again later that evening in a special awards banquet reception. Ms. Margaret Spellings, Secretary of Education, addressed the audience in another compelling speech for the successful education of all children. I am grateful to The SMARTer Kids Foundation, Scholastic Inc, ING US Financial Services, and the Council of Chief State School Officers who contributed to the sponsorship of the National Teacher of the Year Recognition activities.

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608 WEST ALLEGAN STREET • P.O. BOX 30008 • LANSING, MICHIGAN 48909
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The National Science Teachers Association conference held in Dallas, Texas this year was an opportunity to polish up on new science content and to examine the latest ideas in science pedagogy. As the incoming President of the National Middle Level Science Teachers Association (NMLSTA), an affiliate of the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA), there were many events that I had organized throughout the year to support the middle level science educator. Our association has collaborative partnerships with vendors in science education, to share information and host events for teachers. The American Plastics Council, Pitsco, and Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, are corporate sponsors that provide training, funding for science activity breakfasts, and ice cream socials for our members. These meeting times also provide a chance for middle level science teachers to share experiences with colleagues and network on a national level. As a former recipient of the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Science Teaching, I am a Board Member of the Association of Presidential Awardees for Excellence in Science Teaching (APAST), and support this association by planning similar events for its members. As an affiliate organization president, I serve as a council member for NSTA. Responsibilities of this role at the Dallas convention included attending the NSTA Town Hall meeting, the NSTA Middle Level Luncheon, the Council Breakfast, and the Middle Level Sharathon. The NSTA conference was a wonderful week of learning and meeting teachers who challenge themselves to improve science education for children everywhere.

At the March State Board of Education meeting, the Battle Creek Area Math and Science Center gave a presentation about their programs. I was so intrigued by the improvement in the science test scores in high priority schools, that I made a trip to the center. The principal, Mr. Chris Lapekas, gave me a personal tour through the secondary school science and mathematics classrooms and also through the area of the center devoted to the production of the Battle Creek Science Kits. The classrooms were dynamic with students engaged in discussions and rooms fully operational with technology and equipment. The program offered to students at this school is accelerated and developed to provide experiences that students would not normally have available in their home schools. While the secondary program is being taught throughout the school day, elementary science activity continues in another area of the math and science center. The comprehensive K-6 science program kits are produced at this center. Two gymnasium-sized rooms were bustling with activity as orders and kits are disseminated to educators throughout Michigan. Mr. Lapekas and his staff continually promote and instruct professional development programs for teachers. Their program clearly shows why elementary and secondary students who participate in the Battle Creek math and science center programs have improved success in science and mathematics.